

NEWSLETTER

MAY 2004

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Last November I spent a month working with an international group in Korea, and one day we had a talk from a Buddhist monk on Buddhist spirituality, peace and reconciliation. This is so much needed in our world at the present time, and I found his talk so helpful that I would like to share part of it with you. It can be understood in a Christian context and it would be possible to do the meditation using specifically Christian language. APCMH members are all working for greater understanding, so perhaps some people will find this mediation helpful, or can adapt it in a way that they can use.

This is a meditation to bring into being or create loving kindness, and there are five stages, lasting about five minutes each. The first stage is to cultivate loving kindness towards oneself. The monk pointed out that it is difficult to love or respect someone else if we do not love and respect ourselves, so here we generate goodwill towards ourselves, perhaps by remembering a time when we were totally happy and content, or repeating sayings such as, "May I be happy, may I not suffer, may I achieve all I want from life..."

The second stage is to move on to a good friend, of the same sex and about the same age, and to develop loving kindness towards them, wishing them well.

The third stage is to choose a neutral person, for whom we have no particular negative or positive feelings; it could be someone who served us in a shop, someone we have seen in the street etc. These people have a family, people who love them; they have dreams, hopes and longings. One tries to develop the same feeling of loving kindness towards them; may they be well, may they be happy, may they not suffer.

In the fourth stage we choose an enemy; this may simply be someone who irritates us, with whom we do not get on, or it may be someone we actively dislike or hate. We try to bring them before us; they are human beings like us. There is a rift between us, perhaps they have been damaged or distorted somehow, perhaps life has treated them harshly; may they be well, may they be happy, may they not suffer. This, the monk said, can be the most difficult part of the exercise, because we may uncover real feelings of anger and negativity that we did not know we had, towards someone.

Finally, for the last state, one tries to imagine all four people: oneself, the friend, the neutral person and the enemy, sitting in a circle. Let us all be well, let us all be happy, let us not suffer. Try to feel loving kindness for each person in the room, equally. One then allows that feeling to expand, to reach out to everyone in the room, in the area, in the town, in the country, in the continent and reaching out to all beings in the world. May they all be well, may they all be happy, and may none of them suffer. The aim of this practice is to cultivate feelings of love towards all beings.

The monk concluded with a saying on peace by Thich Nhat Hanh that he found inspiring:

There is no enlightenment outside of daily life.

Living in this marvellous reality, living in peace, is something we all want.

But I would like to ask: Do we have the capacity of enjoying peace?

If peace is there, will we be able to enjoy it or will we find it boring?

To me, peace and happiness and joy and life go together.

And we can experience the peace of the divine reality right in the present moment.

It is available, inside us and around us.

If we are not able to enjoy that peace, how can we make peace grow?

Lorna Brockett
Chair, APCMH

SPIRITUALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH : ELIJAH – A CASE STUDY

Elijah the prophet is honoured by all three of the world's main monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He lived in Israel two and a half thousand years ago, and tried to combat the wickedness he saw all around him. His finest hour, maybe, was when single-handedly he competed and triumphed against the prophets of Baal and thus demonstrated that Yahweh was the true God that the people needed to serve. Instead of being encouraged and elated by that experience, very soon after we find Elijah depressed and deflated, isolated and running for his life, because the wicked queen who patronised the system that he had exposed was out to kill him. Feeling he had enough, a failure, let down, deserted by God and man and in a nutshell burnt out, all he wanted to do was to be allowed to die.

The events that followed provide helpful lessons for coming to terms with mental health and spiritual issues. Firstly, Elijah needed to eat and sleep. Having made sure His servant was fed and rested, God allowed Elijah to embark on his own journey that led him to the mountain of God. While alone with God, Elijah experienced the earthquake, wind and fire, but God was not in these. Instead God spoke to Elijah in a gentle whisper. God did not punish Elijah as some might have expected, or excused or explained what had happened as some might have hoped. Instead, after asking Elijah what he was doing there, God allowed him to pour out his grief and complaints. God then told Elijah to go back and get on with the work He had given him to do. So that there was no misunderstanding, God gave Elijah his own job specification, which, as far as we can tell, Elijah followed. The main comforts Elijah received were the assurances that he, and what he did, mattered, God had everything under control and that he was not as alone as he thought.

For those of us with the project (Growing Together) that I have been involved with from the beginning, the issue of spirituality has always been important and one not to be misrepresented or downplayed. As a project we cannot push any particular creed, besides which beliefs differ considerably amongst us and amongst the mentally distressed people from all quarters who come to us and who we try to help. Yet, if they want that, we do empower people to address spiritual issues, and help them to recognise these, along with their physical, social and mental aspects; these are important parts of our make up. And, maybe, some readers, like me, will take heart from Elijah's experience in dealing with depression and recognise that even the most switched on to God among us have their struggles.

John Barber

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*I recently went back to a certain place on my spiritual path – a real point of weakness, which I suppose, can happily become the ultimate place of reassurance. Julia Giles*

### **JUST AS YOU ARE – A Brief Conversation**

Lord, I bear a label.

Not sure who gave it to me,

Just someone along the way

Maybe I gave it to myself.

It bears a message...

"IMPERFECT"

"SOILED GOODS"

Or even...

"PAST SELL-BY DATE."

I carry a label, which, Father, You do not even see.

And you say simply...

"I love You. - Just as you are."

Just as I am?

"JUST AS YOU ARE"

Thank you.

~~~~~  
I was given a thorn in my flesh.

Three times I prayed to the Lord about this and asked him to take it away.

But His answer was: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

St Paul's epistle to the Corinthians 2: 12 vs. 8; 9

Leona Rawson

FROM THE GROWING TOGETHER PROJECT

HELPING TO GET MY LIFE BACK

I started helping out as a volunteer at The 'Growing Together' Project in January 2004. I had been recovering from first episode psychosis and I was feeling lonely and cooped up at home.

I set to work in the Resource Centre where Ann and Jan welcomed me. They showed me the layout of the office and where to find everything. Fortunately, I found the kettle and the coffee, which was where I would make endless cuppas.

My first project was updating the Southend Mental Health Directory, which involved phoning organisations and asking them about the type of charity they were and their contact details. It was good speaking to people and I enjoyed chatting on the phone. I reported my findings to John and then put the changes onto the computer. I became a regular at the office and with each visit I gained more confidence. I also made friends with Lucy, who has a wicked sense of humour, and Margaret who is very efficient. Vanessa has always had kind words to say to me, and Jan and Ann have been ready to talk, listen and laugh about things.

I enjoyed the 'Spring Clean Your Life' day organised by Jan. It was a time to discover a bit more about myself and what I wanted out of life. I also met some guys who worked at the plot such as Mark and Bruce, who told me what goes on there. The best time I've had was at the grand Opening Day in June, 2004 where I took my mum to show her the garden in bloom. I bought tickets to win a hamper, drank some Indian tea and wandered round admiring the vast array of plants and flowers.

All in all, it has been a very positive experience at 'Growing Together', and it has been a memorable time for me. Making new friends has helped me to get my life back.

Sophie

On the need to listen more.

Lord, draw me gently into your peace
and help me to listen to the harmony that lies in you,
the laughter and the tears in other people's live.
Make me more sensitive to others' needs.
Sometimes I hear the words they speak,
but fail to grasp their meaning.
Help me to hear the worry, hidden in a throwaway remark,
the fear wrapped in a joke,
the insecurity behind unbending dogmatism.
Let me hear the cry for help so casually expressed.
Help me to listen more, and think, and think, before I speak,
and then to think again.
And Lord, teach me to hear the sincerity in those
who see and say things in a different way.
Give me the grace not to condemn or criticize,
but first to search for common ground,
and grasp the things that draw us together
not concentrate on what holds us apart.
Help me to take the richness of another's thought,
and hold it, precious as my own.
Above all, may I hear the gentle echoes of your love,
reflected all around me.
Give me the joy of listening to your voice,
the quiet rustle as your arms enfold me.

This poem appeared in the March 1997 edition of the Pastoral Care in Mental Health Newsletter. Can anybody identify the author? It was used as a prayer for the World Mental Health Week Service.

'ANXIETY CARE'

We are a Redbridge charity based in Ilford.

We work in partnership with NHS Direct, helping people with severe anxiety disorders.

WHO? ... WHAT? ... WHERE?

ANXIETY CARE'S SERVICES

"For the first time I've found counselling that attacks the root of my anxiety problem and helps me to begin to solve it in a practical and positive way...altogether, a supportive and very important service".

John

ANXIETY CARE'S APPROACH

Tailoring To your needs

At Anxiety Care we help mobilise your strengths and abilities to deal with anxiety problems such as panic attacks, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorders (CD). We focus on return to normal life rather than simply support. We aim at achieving recovery by allowing you to tailor your own recovery strategy from our range of services.

OUR RANGE OF SERVICES

A team of highly trained volunteers provides our services. Some services are free. For others we operate a sliding scale and ask you to contribute only the amount you are able to afford in relation to the price range quoted. Your contribution will allow us to maintain and develop more services.

1. Help Lines

Tel. (020) 8478 3400

Our help line provides free telephone advice and support on Monday and Wednesday 10am-3pm

2. Structures Recovery Visits

£5-£10 per visit

If you are suffering with acute anxiety or relapse, volunteers are able to work with you in your own home, by helping you to develop a tailored programme of gradual, gentle exposure to your fears.

3. Counselling

£5-£35 per session

Counselling works by using gentle and guiding questions to allow you to explore your difficulties in a private and confidential setting. We also offer e-mail and online counselling.

4. Recovery & Mutual Support Groups

These groups are facilitated by trained volunteers and allow you to share problems, and receive as well as give support.

Face to Face Groups

£2/£3 per session

Monday Evening (6.30pm – 8.45pm)

Mutual support group for general anxiety, phobias and OCD –

Venue: Redbridge Resource Centre, 497/499 Ley Street, Ilford.

Tuesday Evening (6.30pm – 8.45pm)

A structured recovery group for general anxiety, phobias and OCD

Venue: as above

Online Groups

Free

Thursday and Fridays 9-10pm. All anxiety disorders and OCD

Visit our web site for more details at www.anxietycare.org.uk

5. Confidence Building Classes

£4 per evening

Confidence building classes run on Thursday evenings from 7-8.45pm at the Redbridge Resource Centre. An outside trainer facilitates these.

- No potential clients are turned away because of an inability to pay.
- Referrals are taken from the statutory services fee of charge. Although a donation to the charity is always appreciated.

From Gregory Brian Bridge

DOTEKY (CONTACTS) –

A Mental Health users' group in Liberec, CZECH REPUBLIC

Ten years ago I started what became a regular series of visits to Liberec (pronounced "liberets") My first contacts there were a family therapist and a remarkable doctor who had built up a team practising medicine in a holistic way (conventional medicine, family therapy, psychotherapy, acupuncture, relaxation and meditation sessions, art therapy, all in a welcoming and caring environment on the edge of the town.) I was invited to give some talks and through this I got to know some of the users of mental health services.

Liberec is a strange town in some ways. Until the end of the Second World War it was Reichenberg, a predominantly German speaking industrial town. After the war, practically all the German speaking population was expelled or fled. People came in from all over Czechoslovakia and beyond to take over houses and jobs. Building a new community on such foundations is not easy.

The Czech Republic, especially Bohemia in which Liberec is situated, has been a largely secular society for generations, from well before the Communist era. But among those who do go to church, Roman Catholics are the majority, followed a long way behind by the Czech Brethren (somewhat akin to the United Reformed Church in this country) and the Czechoslovak Hussite Church (unique, but with some features in common with liberal Anglicans). After that come the Orthodox and the Unity of Brethren. All of these traditions are represented in Liberec.

It was interesting to me that in such a secular country the users whom I met had such interest in religion. Perhaps it was because the people who chose to meet me were self-selecting, but I think it was also because of the acceptance that mental health service users have found in one of the Liberec churches. The Czechoslovak Hussite church in Liberec, under a succession of pastors, has opened its doors and has given respect as well as help to these people, who over time came to form a group.

The group that now calls itself Doteky (Contacts) includes members of all denominations and none. It has affiliated itself to the relatively new but growing federation of user groups in the Czech Republic, "Kolumbus." Its aims are modest and therefore achievable. I count a number of its members among my good friends and I commend to readers the letter from Jiri Sotona, printed here, which gives more information of the group.

Dear Mr Brian Bridge

Let us introduce our user group "DOTEKY" in Liberec. All of us are users of mental health services. Lot of us have the large experiences with the big mental hospitals. Heads of our group are no professionals.

We organise these activities (since 1996)

- 1. Visiting our friends in a big mental hospital that is 50 kilometres far from our town.*
- 2. Trips around our town. There is very nice nature, so that we need not travel to the nature a very long distance.*
- 3. Talks on some Christian theses, or themes from our daily life.*

The user group in Liberec has seven members. Our costs are low. Though this fact we supplicate a foundation in your country for some little money. That is especially for points no.1 and no. 2 of our activities.

We decided not to be a juridical person, but the Czech national user organisation "KOLUMBUS" is able to accept the financial gift of a foundation to account and to give it to us.

Contact person (member of "DOTEKY"): Jiri Sotona,
Jachymovska 253,
460 10 Liberec 10, Czech Rep.

Data of our friend organisation KOLUMBUS o.s. with juridical subjectivity:

Address: KOLUMBUS o.s.

Na hradku 257 530 02

Pardubice, Czech Rep.

Thank you very much
Jiri Sotona

THE LAW OF THE SEED

Take a look at an apple tree. There might be five hundred apples on the tree, but each apple has just ten seeds. That's a lot of seeds! We might ask, "Why would you need so many seeds to grow just a few more apple trees?" Nature has something to teach us here. It's telling us: "Not all seeds grow. In life, most seeds never grow. So if you really want to make something happen, you had better try more than once."

This might mean:

- You'll attend twenty interviews to get on job.
- You'll interview forty people to find one good employee.
- You'll talk to fifty people to sell one house, one car, one vacuum cleaner
- one insurance policy, or a business idea.
- And you might meet a hundred acquaintances to find one special friend.

When we understand the "Law of the Seed", we don't get so disappointed.
We stop feeling like victims.
We learn how to deal with things that happen to us.

Laws of nature are not things to take personally. We just need to understand them – and work with them.
IN A NUTSHELL: Successful people fail more often. But they plant more seeds.

When things are beyond your control, here are some things that you must NOT DO to avoid misery in your life:

- You must not decide how you think the world SHOULD be.
- You must not make rules for how everyone SHOULD behave.
- Then, when the world doesn't obey your rules, you get angry!
- That's what miserable people do!

On the other hand, let's say you expect that:

- Friends SHOULD return favours.
- People SHOULD appreciate you.
- Planes SHOULD arrive on time.
- Everyone SHOULD be honest.
- Your husband or your best friend SHOULD remember your birthday.

These expectations may sound reasonable. But often, these things won't happen! So you end up frustrated and disappointed.

There's a better strategy. Demand less, and instead, have preferences!

For things that are beyond your control, tell yourself:

I WOULD PREFER "A" BUT IF "B" HAPPENS, IT'S OK TOO!

This is really a change in mindset. It is a shift in attitude, and it gives you more peace of mind...

You prefer that people are polite...but when they are rude, it doesn't ruin your day.

You prefer sunshine...but if it rains, it is ok too!

To become happier, we either need to:

- a) Change the world, or
- b) Change our thinking.

It is easier to change our Thinking!

It is not the problem that is the issue, but rather it is your attitude attending to the problem that is the problem.

It's not what happens to you that determines your happiness –

IT'S HOW YOU THINK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU!

Submitted by MIKE BUSH

THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER

When I am laughing – I am not feeling victimised
When I am laughing – I am not fighting
When I am laughing – I am not being angry
When I am laughing – I am not blaming others

THE PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF LAUGHTER

Increase of O₂ uptake
Circulation of all fluids in the body is speeded up
Internal 'massage' of sluggish organs
Release of endorphins
Immune efficiency boosted and healing promoted
Negative emotions dissipated and optimism enlarge
Right brain functions reinforced

EXPLORE THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE WORDS ATTACHED TO

Head laughter
Heart laughter
Belly laughter

"TENSIONS"

When I laugh at myself I accept myself, and when I laugh at other people in genuine mirth I accept them. Self-acceptance in laughter is the very opposite of self-accusation or pride. For in the laughter I accept myself not because I'm some sort of super person, but precisely because I'm not. There is nothing funny about a super person. There is everything funny about a man who thinks he is.

In laughing at my own claims to importance or regard I receive myself in a sort of loving forgiveness which is an echo of God's forgiveness of me. In much conventional contrition there is a selfishness and pride which are scarcely hidden. In our desperate self-concern we blame ourselves for not being the super person we think we really are. But in laughter we set light to ourselves. That is why laughter is the purest form of our response to God. For to set light to yourself is true humility. Pride cannot rise to levity.

HARRY WILLIAMS

published by Mitchell Beazley

ANGER

When your every cell is burning, and you become just a present flame; when every part of your body has become fiery and you have become anger – not just angry. In this moment of total present-mindedness one can become suddenly aware, and you can start laughing at the absurdity, the foolishness, the stupidity of the whole thing. But this is not suppression; this is laughter. You can laugh at yourself because you have transcended yourself. Never again will anger be capable of mastering you.

OSHO

Do you know what goes to the core of the Trinity?

I will tell you:

In the core of the Trinity the Father **laughs** –
And gives birth to the Son;

The Son **laughs** back at the Father –
And gives birth to the Spirit;

The whole Trinity **laughs** –
And gives birth to us!

MEISTER ECKHART

Nigel Capon
Dennis Mawson
John Cocker

ADVANCE NOTICE

This Year's APCMH Study Day and A.G.M.

Saturday 22nd May 2004

10.00 am to 3.00 pm

"MENTAL HEALTH and YOUNGER PEOPLE"

St Paul's Church Marylebone

"MIND and SPIRIT"

An Essex Conference

for Faith Communities and Mental Health Practitioners

WRITTLE COLLEGE, CHELMSFORD

WEDNESDAY 4th FEBRUARY

9.30AM TO 4.30PM

John Mahoney, Director NIMHE Eastern will chair the Conference

Speakers include **Peter Gilbert**, National NIMHE Fellow

Katherine Aitchison, Consultant Psychiatrist

and content will involve input from a number of different faith groups.

*NIMHE eastern are delighted to be associated with this exciting conference,
in association with the charity **InterAct** and a cross sector partnership.*

The Conference has an important set of objectives around partnership working between faith communities and mental health services. It will consider the role of spirituality in mental wellbeing and the role of faith communities in mental health promotion.

The Conference is particularly focused on Essex.

Workshops and an interactive approach will enable lively discussion and ensure a range of views are heard and learned from. The Conference will conclude by putting together some key forward planning points to take us forward in practical partnership.

***For more information or to book a place, please contact Erika Cole NIMHE Eastern
01206 287577 or email Cole@nemhpt.nhs.uk***

THE ASSOCIATION FOR PASTORAL CARE IN MENTAL HEALTH

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The views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Association

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